

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report on the
Trade Agreements Program
March 27, 1996

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 163 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2213), I transmit herewith the 1996 Trade Policy Agenda and

1995 Annual Report on the Trade Agreements Program.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
March 27, 1996.

Remarks Announcing the “One Strike and You’re Out” Initiative in
Public Housing
March 28, 1996

Thank you. You know, when we were walking over here, Leora said she was nervous. I don’t think she told the truth. [*Laughter*] I’m just glad she’s not on the ballot this year. [*Laughter*] Didn’t she do a great? I want to thank Leora Robinson and Lieutenant Ramirez. They both spoke so well and so passionately, and they spoke the truth. They spoke on behalf of the mayors, the police chiefs, the housing administrators, and the residents who are here and people all across America. And I thank them.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here; and Mr. McGaw, the head of the ATF; and my friends the mayors who are here, and especially—I know the mayor of Toledo is a proud mayor today, hearing these two fine people speak. I thank the Vice President for the work that he has done in our whole community empowerment initiative, trying to give people all over America control of their lives again. And I want to echo what the Vice President said; it is literally an inspiration for me to have the opportunity to work with Henry Cisneros, a man who believes that all problems can be solved and goes about proving it day-in and day-out. I thank you, sir, for what you have done.

In my State of the Union Address I challenged local housing authorities and tenant associations to adopt this “one strike and you’re out” policy to restore the rule of law to public housing, to simply say, “If you mess up your community, you have to turn in your key. If you insist on abusing or intimidating or hurting

other people, you’ll have to live somewhere else.”

It seems so simple, it’s hard to imagine how we ever went so wrong. Public housing was created with a simple purpose in mind, to provide good, inexpensive homes for good, hard-working people, so they could care for their children, hold down their jobs, and eventually save enough, if they chose, to move into homes of their own. Public housing has never been a right; it has always been a privilege. And it is amazing how far some people in some places have strayed from that original mission.

I think it is worth saying today again, even though you have just seen evidence of it, most people who live in public housing work. Most people who live in public housing are doing their very best to be good parents. Most people who live in public housing deserve a better deal than they have gotten in the past from the kinds of things that have gone on. And we are determined to help the people all across this country change that so that everybody will be able to tell the story that Leora and Lieutenant Ramirez told today.

The only people who deserve to live in public housing are those who live responsibly there and those who honor the rule of law. We’ve worked hard to protect public housing residents with Operation Safe Home and public housing drug elimination programs. We’ve made 6,800 arrests, seized hundreds of weapons, confiscated \$3 million worth of illegal drugs. And coupled with our other anticrime initiatives, we’re help-

ing to restore order in our cities, to our one-stoplight towns, and in our public housing. But we know we have to do more.

This policy today is a clear signal to drug dealers and to gangs: If you break the law, you no longer have a home in public housing, "one strike and you're out." That should be the law everywhere in America.

To implement this rule, we are taking two steps. First, I will direct Secretary Cisneros to issue guidelines to public housing and law enforcement officials to spell out with unmistakable clarity how to enforce "one strike and you're out." These guidelines are essential.

Believe it or not, the Federal law has actually authorized "one strike" eviction since 1988. But many public housing authorities have not fully understood the scope of their legal authority. Others have problems working with residents or local police or the courts. And for a small number, enforcement has frankly not been a priority. For whatever reason, the sad fact is that in most places in this country, "one strike" has not been carried out. You see the consequences when it is in what these fine people have said today.

Now there will be no more excuses, for these national guidelines tell public housing authorities the steps they must take to evict drug dealers and other criminals. They explain how housing authorities must work with tenants, with the police, with the courts, with our Government to get the job done. They also tell housing authorities how to screen tenants for criminal records. With effective screening, many of the bad people we're trying hard to remove today won't get into public housing in the first place.

The second thing we're going to do is to make sure these guidelines don't sit around and gather dust. Under the new rules HUD will propose, for the first time there will actually be penalties for housing projects that do not fight crime and enforce "one strike and you're out." Superior housing authorities that live up to their responsibilities will improve their chances for increased funding and for greater flexibility in how the housing authority is run by the local people. Those that don't will face increased supervision and might lose out on extra financial help.

I know that for some, "one strike and you're out" sounds like hardball. Well, it is. It is because it's morally wrong for criminals to use up homes that could make a big difference in

the lives of decent families. And as Leora said better than I could have, if people aren't going to do anything wrong in public housing, they have nothing to fear from "one strike and you're out."

After all, it's not as if nobody wants to live there. There are three people in line for every one person who has a slot in public housing. In many places, the waiting list today is up to 4 years. This is a privilege, not a right. The people who are living there deserve to be protected, and the good people who want to live in public housing deserve to have a chance. The people who are in the middle, doing the wrong thing, must be removed.

There is no reason in the world to put the rights of a criminal before those of a child who wants to grow up safe or a parent who wants to raise that child in an environment where the child is safe, in no danger of being shot down in a gang war, and can't be stolen away by drug addiction.

We know this policy works. Beyond Toledo, we know that in North Carolina at the Greensboro Housing Authority, where this policy has been implemented, crime is down 55 percent. We know that in Georgia at the Macon Housing Authority, drug-related arrests have fallen 91 percent since the policy was implemented in 1989. In both of those cities and in other cities all across the country where "one strike" has been implemented, one statistic is rising, the number of residents who feel safe.

We also know why "one strike" works, because for it to work, people have to join together in common cause. The Leora Robinsons have to support the Lieutenant Ramirezes. People have to work together to believe that they can recreate a community. When we tell you how to evict a drug dealer, therefore, you have to take the action. The guidelines only point the way. We'll make sure that our police have the tools they need to get crime out of public housing. But the residents, the administrators, the neighbors, the people that know that they can recreate a sense of community and security and a decent environment for children, they have to support the police in taking that action.

We can work for better housing in Washington, but only you, those of you who are here and your counterparts all across America, can make better housing and safer housing a reality where you live.

For too many years, the chaos in some of our public housing units has been a national blind spot and a national disgrace. Most Americans probably think it has to be that way. Many of them who had had no personal experience with tenants may even believe most people who live in public housing are lawless, are not working, are not concerned parents. All of that is wrong.

Now we are going to give the good, decent, law-abiding citizens in public housing the life they deserve, and we're going to give the kids the future they deserve by doing what we should have been doing all along, and doing it together.

I want every American to believe that if he or she works hard and plays by the rules, they can share in the American dream. I want every parent to believe that if he or she works hard, they can do a better job raising their kids in a country that's supporting them, not undermining them. I want this country to come together across the lines of income and race, not be divided. Surely, our dreams of opportunity

and decent childhoods and strong families and unity in this country can be furthered by what we're doing here today. And surely, others will see this and say that they have to do the same.

I want to now sign this Executive order, and I'd like to invite the people who are here from Greensboro and from Macon to come up as well: Deborah Shaw and Deputy Chief David Williams from the Greensboro Housing Authority, and Joann Fowler and Sergeant Richard Kory of the Macon Housing Authority. And I'd like to ask Lieutenant Ramirez and Leora to come up here and also be here when we sign.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Leora Robinson, resident of Ravine Park Village, Toledo, OH; and Lt. Frank Ramirez of the Toledo Police Department. Following his remarks, the President signed a memorandum for the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development on the "One Strike and You're Out" guidelines.

Memorandum on the "One Strike and You're Out" Guidelines

March 28, 1996

Memorandum for the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Subject: One Strike and You're Out Guidelines

Since 1993, my Administration has undertaken comprehensive efforts to improve the safety and quality of life in our Nation's public housing. Operation Safe Home, the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program, and steps to keep out weapons have been important parts of this overall safety effort. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has enabled cities to demolish dozens of blighted, high-rise projects and replace them with safer developments. The Department is also changing the social dynamic in public housing by instilling positive incentives for personal responsibility and family self-sufficiency. In all of these initiatives, HUD has worked closely with the Congress and with public housing managers and residents, elected officials, and Federal and local law enforcement agencies.

Today, the majority of the Nation's approximately 3,400 public housing authorities provide safe, attractive, quality homes. But there remains too much public housing in this country that is ravaged by drugs, crime, and violence.

It is imperative that we protect the ability of all individuals to live in safety and free from fear, intimidation, and abuse. It is also imperative that our precious public housing resources be made available only to responsible, law-abiding individuals. We must have zero tolerance for those who threaten the safety and well-being of decent families and innocent children who live in public housing.

That is why, in my State of the Union Address, I expressed my strong support for a clear and straightforward rule for those who endanger public housing communities by dealing drugs or engaging in other criminal activity: One Strike and You're Out of public housing.

At my request, HUD has now developed, in consultation with the Department of Justice, new national Guidelines on One Strike and